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PURPOSE OF THE JOURNAL

1. To present theoretical and research papers in scientific graphology according to traditional academic standards.
2. To create a forum for helping graphology gain a wider academic and professional audience in America.
3. To interface with the international professional graphological community.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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American Society of Professional Graphologists

CHILDREN IN DISTRESS: THE GRAPHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

Lois Vaisman with Virginia DiLeo

ABSTRACT: There is a professional consensus that a composite of screening tools are needed to effectively evaluate the developing child. It becomes more apparent that a multi-discipline effort is required in order to identify and diagnose our at-risk population of youngsters. Graphology, a psycho-diagnostic technique, can readily provide an essential service by developing a protocol to determine children suffering from overwhelming, prolonged or chronic distress.

The understanding of children through their developing handwriting requires guidelines which give scope and definition to the wide range of variations present. For this reason graphic clusters or syndromes that may indicate potential problems can be identified only after the graphologist is familiar with diversity found in children's handwriting.

Along with graphic knowledge, the examiner would have an understanding of the maturation process in children. The fields of study should encompass not only gross developmental stages, but also the psychological, emotional and cognitive levels that are age appropriate. In order to establish a baseline view of how children mature, it is necessary to be familiar with the existing literature in the above fields.

No clear understanding of children would be complete without a grasp of the works of Jean Piaget, Bruno Bettelheim, Erik Erikson and Alice Miller. These psychologists explored the basic cognitive and psychological aspects of child development. It is also necessary to be acquainted with the studies of Howard Gardner, Robert Burns, Joseph DiLeo and Rhoda Kellogg, experts in the area of the significance of children's drawings and scribbles. These authors afford us the insight to comprehend the dynamics that are in operation during the child's life.

The incorporation of this knowledge aids the graphologist to understand the status of the child in context with his writing. It is hoped that with further use of graphology, a valuable tool will evolve to compliment the standard assessment protocol. With this in mind, "Children in Distress" has been written.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHILDREN AND ADULT HANDWRITING

Among some graphologists there is a common opinion that a child's handwriting cannot be analyzed because it does not represent free expression of the personality. It is true that while the child is learning to master the complexity of writing, spontaneous graphic movement is somewhat limited. Nevertheless, given some restrictions, an analysis of children can be attained regardless of the age. Unlike

adults, children's evaluation is benefitted when studied in conjunction with other graphic expressions. This can include those activities that incorporate drawings of one's family, scribbles, or the Star-Wave Test developed by Ursula Ave-Lailment.

Children perceive the world as a larger version of their own family. Whatever specific family dynamics are involved, a child feels that this is the norm. Having little life experience or contact with different family systems, the child tends to reflect behavior patterns that they are most familiar with.

Conversely, many more adults have gained a perspective when viewing their individual family. There is an awareness of what is the collective norm of family life, and accordingly, the adult will try to adapt him or herself to a style that is correct for their own mental health.

What this means for the child graphologist is that the cultural background of the child is extremely relevant. Socio-economic factors such as the following need to be considered: language spoken at home, level of academic expectations, composition of family members (e.g., whether or not it is an intact nuclear family), cultural background, economic status.

It is crucial to gather this information only after an initial analysis is completed, in order to insure objectivity and to comply with the federal non-discriminatory practices.

Until recently, many graphological works have also avoided the subject of children because of lack of information concerning their graphic development. In part, this may have been the result of an outdated theory that children's personality was not formed sufficiently for study. Current research has shown that individual personality characteristics are evident at birth. People are in fact born with inherent traits that remain constant throughout their life. Recognition of personality style and temperament will aid in determining the composite picture of the child.

Although there are several adjustments to be made when analyzing children's handwriting, experienced professional graphologists can, with modifications, begin to assess children.

GUIDELINES FOR ANALYZING CHILDREN'S HANDWRITING

One of the best ways to analyze children's handwriting is by comparison with the child's peer group. Where side by side differences can be most easily and readily seen and ranked by skills, maturity, coordination and overall gestalt form level. The school model letters should be used as a base from which each child begins to recognize and to write individual letter forms. A copy of the particular style taught in school is essential, be it Zaner Bloser, Palmer or any other model, because the variations and deviation from the standard, supply the graphologist with a foundation for the analysis.

At a certain age, the ability to copy model letters are expected as the norm. Departure from the standard pattern serve as indicators as to the direction and scope of the child's individual expression. The average age given for this beginning skill is between four and six.

Most children (up until the onset of puberty) do not embrace a distinctive style. This is a positive sign because it suggests a diminished need for a structured persona. In contrast, severely disturbed children usually exhibit a very obvious and definite configuration at an earlier age. It is believed that this constructed pattern serves as a defense mechanism.

In order for a dysfunctional child to gain some degree of control or mastery, he may establish very stylized prototypes with expressive activities, including graphic movement.

What are some of the most common deviations found with children's writing? By far, a very typical variation with young writers, is the drawing of a picture in addition to the written text. Basically, the immature writer will illustrate her work because it helps to explain and clarify written material. It is also a gratifying and tangible expression for the child. Children have difficulty recognizing their own writing, but not their own art work. The picture becomes a personal production that is uniquely their own. It expresses a spontaneous, pleasurable activity to replace the mechanical work needed to write the letters.

COMMON DEVIATIONS IN CHILDREN'S HANDWRITING

1. Use of dots between words to emphasize the separateness of each written entity.
2. Reversals of letters such as b and d, p and q, n and u.
3. Underlining or capitalizing those words with an emotional element such as mother, father, type of pet, a favorite activity (e.g., baseball).
4. Capitalizing favorite letters within words, (e.g, the first letter from the child's name).
5. While drawing a letter, the child may contract muscles and move his or her tongue, head or torso.
6. Occasionally, individual habits by a particular teacher may be a factor (like licking the tip of a pencil before beginning to write), or the child may pick up a graphological idiosyncrasy (e.g., long beginning upstrokes).

These deviations should be consistent with age, maturation and level of expectation. For a frame of reference, the child should be compared to the developmental norms as, by Freud and Piaget.

Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, whose teacher was the French graphologist, Pierre Janet, defined and described the **FOUR STAGES OF COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**: sensorimotor, preoperations, concrete operations, formal operations. The first stage (0-2 yrs) is infancy where the child is first beginning to coordinate mental and physical activities; the second (2-6 yrs) involves language development and the beginnings of symbolic thinking; the third (7-11 yrs) is a time for creating order; and the fourth stage (11-15 yrs) involves hypothetical and abstract thinking.

The third stage is the one most strongly associated with learning and mastering the writing process. Handwriting is progressing and maturing from printing to the more fluid cursive style, that is expected at the end of this level. Typically,

youngsters at this time like to organize and classify things. Thinking is very concrete or realistic, but still primitive, e.g., a person calls on the phone, "Is your mommy home?" he asks, and the child responds, "Yes," and hangs up. The child is interested in accurate details. This, in part, explains why some children at this point may stop drawing as they do not have the skills to execute on paper the intricate, exact detail that is a step in their cognitive maturation.

Another important consideration for developmental appropriateness concerns the PSYCHO-SEXUAL STAGES of Freud. Where Piaget is most concerned with cognitive processes, Freud is more concerned with the interface of biological needs and psychological repercussions. Thus, oral stage (0-1.5 yrs) corresponds to the time of breast feeding, emphasis on the erogenous zone of the mouth and the dynamics of dependency needs. The anal stage (1.5-3 yrs) involved the period of toilet training, the anus and various dynamics such as order vs. disorder and cleanliness vs. dirtiness. During the phallic period (3-6 yrs), the libido has shifted to the genitals so this is a time for sexual considerations. The latent period (7-11 yrs) concerns the submergence or repression of libidinal concerns and interest in social activities. And the genital period (11-15 yrs) involves maturation, both physical and mental.

Corresponding to the third stage of Piaget's theory, children in the latency period are at the age when they begin to learn to write. During this period interest in sexual matters and the opposite sex are not a high priority interest (unless, there may be a problem). That is why pictures of a sexual nature at this time are rare. Latency age children when asked to draw a person usually draw their own sex first. Failure to adopt a sex role in conformity with the biological one may be a strong indication of a problem, i.e., absence of same sex parent, premature sexual activity, sexual abuse.

As an interesting note of passage, some adolescent girls draw the opposite sex first when asked to draw a person. This may reflect either social conditioning regarding sex roles, or demonstrate the young girl's interest. Typically, this corresponds to the genital stage of sexual maturity. When viewing the handwriting of children, regardless of how they are coping with their environment, it is important to have a clear picture of what is the accepted norm, while maintaining a flexible view of individual growth.

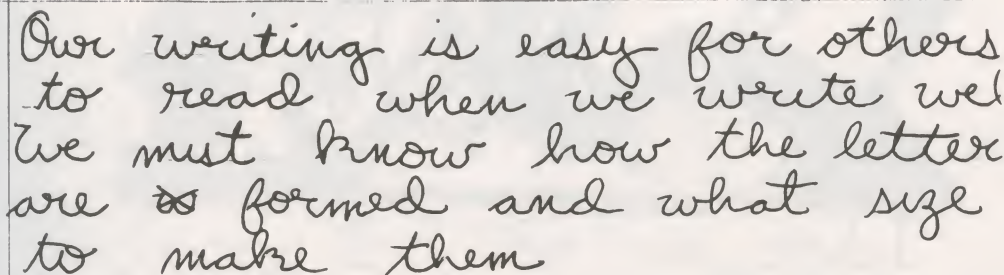
GRAPHIC INDICATIONS IN ADJUSTED CHILDREN

Before identifying children in distress, the graphologist should be familiar with handwriting of children who fall into the normal range. Without a wide scope and prospective of individuality with youngsters, the analyst may be quick to see problems where none existed.

There is a basic description of graphics that would be consistent with children who have the resiliency to cope with most situations. These children demonstrate a natural vitality, firm strokes and an overall integrated writing. Other indicators include the following graphics:

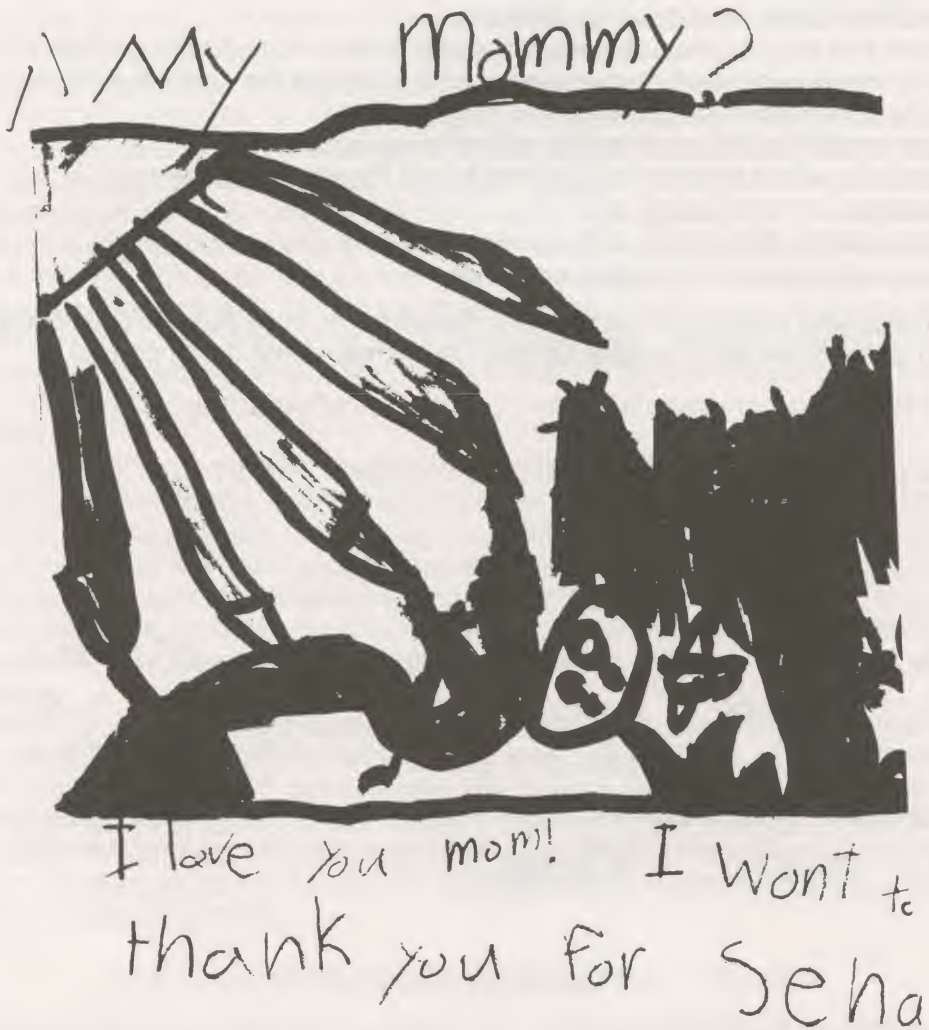
1. Size of handwriting is large than with most adults.
2. Middle zone emphasis, mainly.
3. Pressure is consistent and heavier (cannot be confused with spurts of pressure or digging in).
4. Rounded forms especially for females.
5. Good and regular spacing between words (that is more important than actual letter forms or space between letters, as it indicates the ability to perceive the entity of the individual word).
6. Connectedness for most letters (with the use of cursive).
7. Mistakes will be crossed out, but not heavy filled in or covered up.
8. Moderate to high energy level.
9. Unhesitating, firm stroke, with curving lines.
10. Personal pronoun I is larger than script.

It is necessary to keep in mind the sex of the writer, as male children's handwriting tend to be more erratic. Females usually have greater fine motor control.



Our writing is easy for others
to read when we write well
We must know how the letters
are ~~so~~ formed and what size
to make them

Figure 1. Female, 9 yrs, 1 month. Resiliency, intelligence and the resources to overcome the conflicts in life are revealed in this sample. Positive graphics include the clear middle zone, roundedness and excellent spacing.



(some retouching)

Figure 2. Male, 7 yrs, 5 months. Another example of positive graphics. Note use of curved forms for the capital M in Mommy in contrast with the angled M in My. The diacritic is also curved, both graphics indicative of warm family relationships.

GRAPHIC INDICATIONS OF DISTRESS

The graphic composite that is seen in handwriting reflects two main ways children respond to stress. Either the acting out behavior can be aggressive or passive withdrawal. Studies have shown that it is more common for the male to be aggressive and the female more passive, although there are many exceptions to this rule.

GRAPHICS OF THE AGGRESSIVE CHILD

1. Extremely heavy pressure or bursts of heavy pressure.
2. Rigid, straight strokes.
3. Sharp vertical movements that may be discontinuous.
4. Any shaded or dark letters.
5. Retraced letters.
6. Patching or soldering of letters.
7. Filled in middle zone letters.
8. Use of angles and arcades.
9. Depending upon the type of aggression, the writing may be tight and constricted or large, bold and expansive.
10. Blunt endings.

Spelling

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| 1. independent | 9. federal |
| 2. revolution | 10. international |
| 3. economic | 1. politics |
| 4. frontier | 2. Congress |
| 5. justice | 3. senator |
| 6. president | 4. constitution |
| 7. pioneer | 5. liberty |
| 8. national | 6. democracy |

Figure 3. Male, 10 yrs. Note the erratic slant, broken-back f in line 4, retraced letters, particularly the a's, darkened i-dots and extended t-bar crossings. Child is aggressive in a sneaky way, besides acting out, used feces to write on wall in school.

Author - Franklin W Dixon
Title - Night of the Werewolf
Illustrator - Leslie Morrill
Publisher - By Simon & Schuster
Copyright - By Stratemeyer Syndicate (all rights reserved)
Summary: When a ferocious, wolf-like creature appears in a small town, the Hardy boys are engaged to clear the name of a young man who has a history of werewolves in his family.
Number of pages - 181

Figure 4. Male, 10 yrs. Both samples show stylized, embellished writing. General distress is apparent. Note the extended upper extensions, which may relate to his obsession with his hair. He will not let anyone touch his head, and always carries a comb. He also displays sexually inappropriate behavior.

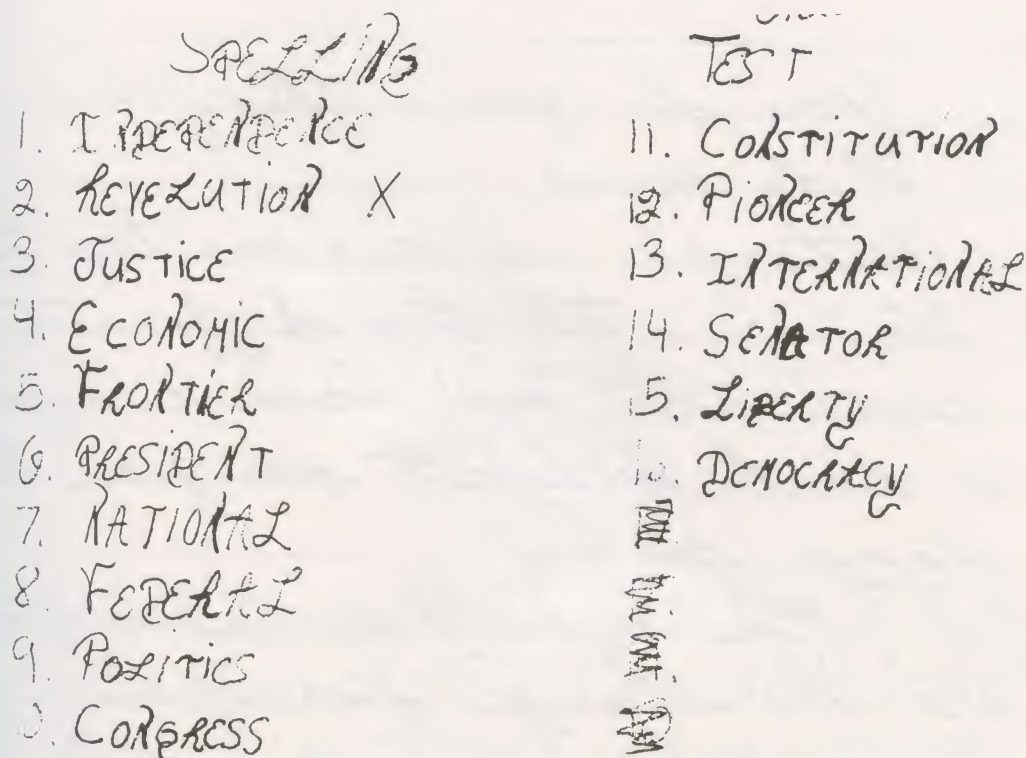


Figure 4.

GRAPHICS OF THE PASSIVE CHILD

1. Light pressure.
2. Changes in slant and direction. (This graphic must be in correspondence with others on this list, or this graphic could indicate conflict and/or aggression.)
3. Small writing with large spaces.
4. Emphasis on the horizontal rather than the vertical axis.
5. Very short, sketchy strokes.
6. More erasures than cross outs.
7. Personal pronoun I and name not emphasized.
8. Flattened middle zone.

Togetherness

You do your thing
I do mine

Although we are one together
We are still two different
people with our own ways
I don't expect for you to
change for me

Nor would you want
me to change for you

For you are you
and I am I

But if we do meet and
find we can be together
then it will be beautiful

Figure 5. Female. Note backwards letters in lower zone, covered strokes as in the upper loop of the h, pronounced right slant and rigidity to the writing. The writer appears to lack energy. This female is sexually active and seductive to all males.

Louisa

AMERICAN
HISTORY

PEOPLE WANT TO BE FREE.
IN 1776 THE AMERICANS
FOUGHT A REVOLUTIONARY WAR
AGAINST ENGLAND. WE WON - AND
FORMED THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA.

Figure 6. Female. Note erratic slant and spacing and use of bizarre diacritics. Female is highly disturbed and an inpatient at a psychiatric hospital. She may be subject to hallucinations.

good

10/31/75

~~Edward~~ ~~W. Smith~~

- OBSERVATION ① THE BALL FIT THROUGH
THE RING
② HEAT THE BALL
IT TURNS RED
③ NOW THE BALL WON'T FIT
THROUGH THE RING
④ PUT BALL IN WATER IT MADE
A LOUD NOISE AND LOST ITS RED
COLOR STRAIGHT CAME UP
⑤ THE BALL FIT THROUGH THE
RING

What can you conclude (why did it
happen that way?)

Figure 7. Male. The first name has been erased and rewritten. Ataxia is evident on numerous letters such as the n of won't, line 3 and the o of through on the following line. Spacing is poor as well. This boy is extremely ambivalent about himself. He is an inpatient at a psychiatric hospital.

GRAPHIC INDICATORS OF GENERAL DISTRESS

1. Irregular pressure.
2. Erratic baseline.
3. Strange letter formations.
4. Breaks in the stable (vertical) axis, e.g., broken-back letters.
5. Angularity in lower zone.
6. Poor trizonal dynamics.
7. Inconsistent personal pronoun I.
8. Arrhythmia and/or fragmented letters.
9. Random changes in style or slant.
10. First name is crossed out, erased or otherwise distorted.

As in the case of adult graphological work, it is crucial to analyze an actual collection of samples written over a reasonable period of time. The overall gestalt is more important than any individual element. These graphics noted above should be used as an initial checklist along with any additional visual picture such as drawings, doodles, family drawings and the Star-Wave Test.

THE STAR-WAVE TEST

The Star-Wave test is a recent development in the graphological field designed by Ursula Ave-Lallant of Germany. She believes that this test may bridge the gap between handwriting and drawing. The study employs basic graphological principles such as form, motion and use of space.

The process of drawing a "starry sky over ocean waves," as the test requests with no further explanation, can express psychological material of unconscious themes. The spontaneous drawing can also incorporate the three writing zones, the upper zone representing the sky, the middle zone depicted by the stars and the lower zone would symbolize the water of the ocean waves. This test is quite informative as a supplement to existing personality testing and projective techniques. An additional bonus is the fact that the universal use of the symbols of sky, stars and ocean has proved to be helpful when dealing with a multi-cultural population.

ANALYSIS OF PARENTS' SCRIPT

Another advantageous way to further evaluate the conflicts and problems of the distressed child is by analyzing the parent's script. By studying the adult script, examiners may see the source of difficulty, or focus on the areas likely to cause stress. The graphologist should note if the child identifies with the same sex parent, or has copied deviant behavior from the dominant caretaker.



Figure 8. Male, 10 yrs. Star-Wave Test. Note phallic waves and eyes peering over the horizon. This person is barely keeping his head above the water.

Any and all information that can add to the composite picture of the child is beneficial to the analyst and aids in the description of the at-risk child.

It is hoped that this preliminary step towards the understanding of children's handwriting will stimulate graphologists to develop this overlooked area of study. With increased knowledge in child graphology, experts may intervene more effectively while aiding the growing child. Thus, the respectability of professionals can be advanced accordingly.

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BIOGRAPHY: Lois Vaisman teaches the psychology of handwriting at The New School For Social Research. With a B/A from C.W. Post and a M/A from Queens College, post graduate studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Ms. Vaisman has appeared on national TV on the *Today Show* for her work on the handwriting of children. A personnel consultant, she has worked as an educational therapist for the Bronx Children's Psychiatric Center and also Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute. Having lectured at many conferences around the country, her publications include articles in *OMNI* and *Mademoiselle*.

BIOGRAPHY: Virginia DiLeo is a graduate of Holy Cross Academy. College courses include psychology at Queens College and eight semesters of graphology at the New School For Social Research. Ms. DiLeo is a certified graphologist with training as a handwriting expert. She has taught graphology for adult education and performed research on the handwritings of children in distress, addictive personalities and Alzheimer's patients.

"Is life so dear, or peace
 so sweet, as to be purchased
 at the price of chains and
 slavery? Forbid it, Almighty
 God! I know not what
 course others may take, but
 as for me, give me liberty or
 give me death!"

Patrick Henry

A B C D E F G H I J K L M
 N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

a b c d e f g h i j k l m
 n o p q r s t u v w x y z

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

a/c c/o o/o @ \$ & % Co. OK C.O.D.

Simple, Practical, Rapid, Single-Stroke Letters
 A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U
 V W X Y Z 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
 Parcels, Maps
 a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z